

ON PARADISE IN JEWISH MYSTICISM

**Moshe Idel**

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel.

Email: idel@hum.huji.ac.il

**Abstract.** The dominant approaches to Kabbalah in modern scholarship are basically historical and philological. This is the manner in which the founder of modern scholarship in the field, Gershom Scholem, described his school. Though he also embraced more phenomenological analyses, this approach is less represented in the first stages of Kabbalah scholarship, though it becomes more evident in the last decades. In the writings of Schlomo G. Shoham, an existential approach to Kabbalah – as to humanities in general – has been offered, one in which the experiential dimensions of this lore have been put in sharp relief. In the following pages I shall attempt to underscore some existential interpretations of the concept of Paradise in Jewish mysticism, emphasizing the different spiritual structures that informed the various schools. In a manner reminiscent of Shoham's emphasis on different structures that explain human spiritual life and behaviour, the following remarks will juxtapose the divergences between the ecstatic and theosophical-theurgical schools of Kabbalah.

**Key Words:** Paradise, Jewish mysticism, ecstatic Kabbalah, theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah, Schlomo G. Shoham

## On Nostalgia, Plenitude and Deferment

Mysticism is, more than other forms of religion, a matter of experiencing a certain form of plenitude.<sup>1</sup> This experience is often conceived to happen by a contact with the divine, or one of its ramifications in nature or in soul. Those encounters may be deemed of as unique and idiosyncratic, or to be a regaining of a primordial experience of plenitude, namely a paradisaical state, or on the contrary, an anticipation of the ideal life in the eschaton. The primordial or the eschatological sorts of religious experience of fullness are based upon the assumption that the mystic is active in religious societies whose founding mythologies, both those concerning the beginning and those portraying the end, were shared by the mystic on their face value. The life in the present is conceived of by some scholars of religion as been defective or fallen, or to use a famous phrase coined by Gershom Scholem 'life in deferment'.<sup>2</sup>

Fulfillment is therefore connected in the views of primitivists, like Mircea Eliade, to an attempt to return to illo tempore, or for a Hegelian-oriented scholar like Scholem, as delayed until the eschaton.<sup>3</sup> The more regular religious life is diminished either by the claims that a prehistorical state has been conceived of as ideal, à la Eliade, and it should therefore be retrieved by the repetition of the founding rituals, or if the post-historical experience is conceived to be the perfect one, as Scholem believed that the Jews believed. In the former, the terror of history created an attempt to transcend it by a leap back into prehistory.

In the later, the eschaton was conceived as an attempt to enter a more authentic experience by escaping what he considered to be a non-historical existence. In both cases the experience of plenitude is attained by transcending the present either by enacting a lost past, or anticipating the future, within the span of a momentary personal experience. In the present context, dealing with the concept of Paradise, I would like to concentrate my introductory remarks on Eliade's theory which describes religion, and sometimes mysticism, as a 'nostalgia for Paradise'. By this phrase he means

"the desire to find oneself always and without effort in the Centre of the World, at the heart of reality; and by a short cut and in a natural manner to transcend the human condition, and to recover the divine condition - as a Christian would say, the condition before the fall."<sup>4</sup>

This and other discussions, as well as the resort to the very term nostalgia, point to a transient feeling, an emotion or a desire, less a

sustained effort to materialize such a nostalgia in regular behavior. Eliade's emphasis on the nature of such an achievement in the phrases 'always', 'without effort' and 'short cut' in the above passage, and "easy" in another one in the same context, illustrates the transient nature of those feelings, and their implication is that at least in their modern and secularized forms, the Paradise nostalgia is no more than a fleeting emotion,<sup>5</sup> part of a broader nostalgia for origins in general.<sup>6</sup> The importance of the fall, in fact of the Christian vision of the expulsion from the Paradise, as Eliade is careful to point out expressly, is the sine qua non condition for both the nostalgia to a lost state of being, and for the transient form of the emotion: after all this Paradise cannot be regained directly. As in Gershom Scholem's vision of the end as an experience that cannot be fully experienced now, and thus Jewish religion means 'life in deferment', for Eliade we all live in a state of nostalgia.

Speaking as a collective, the Jews could try to hasten the end of history in order to escape its terrors; active messianism, in its apocalyptic forms has as its main objective the fate of a collective. As individuals the Jewish mystics could not expect the change of the course of history for the sake of their personal redemption. As an individual, the spiritual master could attempt to evade the existentialist and historical pressures by an effort to reach the lost Paradise. The eschaton is a state in emergence which is, in spite the descriptions in the eschatological writings, a terra incognita. However, the Paradise, either as a geographical entity or as a spiritual state, exists since the very beginning, and there were only little doubts as to its availability. After all, the righteous are generally finding their way to it as soon as they depart from our mundane realm. This is the reason of the important role played by the paradisaical metaphors and motifs that will be analyzed in the following discussions.

However, the attempt to anticipate the experience of the lost Paradise is fraught with dangers; it means, at least to a certain extent, a confrontation with the expulsion of Adam from the Paradise by the divine anger or will. The mystic is initiating, therefore a religious adventure that is not required by the canonic Jewish texts, and this initiative involves the dangerous aspect of the return. The myth of Paradise is one of the most influential Biblical stories both in Judaism and outside. It is so because it shaped the understanding of the nature of man and his relationship to God as exposed in the founding document of the Western thought. However, beyond the theological and anthropological aspects of the myth, which are explicit in the myth itself, there is also an aspect that is implicit in the Paradise story and has attracted the interest of many thinkers; it is the eschatological implication of this story. Knowing the starting point of man and his sin serves not only as a piece of sacred history, but also it may indicate the path of a possible return after the fatal sin. Paradise is not only the piece of land Adam was expelled from; it is also the locus of the righteous after their death and thus the center of attraction of anyone

aspiring for personal salvation. In a more broader context, Paradise is not only a prototype, like the isle of the blessed of the Jewish and Christian religiosities, but also an archetype for the longing of man for a better, perfect state of being, a place ensuring immortality.

By assuming the above assumptions, we contend that the mythical aspects of religion, and in our case the biblical Paradise myth, were accepted and served as the springboard for the more detailed and complex speculations of all the thinkers in Judaism or Christianity. As part of the creation myth, this Paradise one would, according to such a view, inspire the main parameters of the discussions inspired by it. The plain sense of the story, with its mythical-historical and sometimes geographical implications are indeed prone to inspire the nostalgia of creatures damned to remember the ideal while living in a fallen state.

However, this was not always the case: according to forms of interpretations en vogue during the Middle Ages, the allegorical and the symbolic ones, the Paradise was much more than an historical story, if historical at all, or a spacial entity. If it happened, those authors whose views will be surveyed below, the Paradise story is an archetypal event, and as such it is repeatable, it is repeated, or according to some views, should be repeated. Those trends which attempted to embrace the Scriptures as pointing to realities different from the historical and geographical, emphasized the spiritual or the mental processes as the inner meaning of Paradise, namely forms of truth that transcends the parameters that inform the plain sense of the Bible.<sup>7</sup>

Let me start with the latest, and perhaps the most interesting and paradoxal reading of the Paradise story, that of Franz Kafka's

"The expulsion from Paradise is in its main significance eternal: Consequently the expulsion from Paradise is final, and life in this world irrevocable, but the eternal nature of the occurrence (or, temporally expressed, the eternal recapitulation of the occurrence) makes it nevertheless possible that not only could we live continuously in Paradise, but that we are continuously there in actual fact, no matter whether we know it here or not."<sup>8</sup>

Unlike Eliade, Kafka assume that the expulsion is both final and recurrent, as it is the possibility to still be in Paradise. By assuming that the expulsion is an archetypal event, all its stages are still taking place, otherwise it would be impossible to be expelled. With Kafka, there is no way to be nostalgic, as human life combines all the possible versions: both life within and without Paradise. Is this reading of Kafka an uniquely Kafkaques interpretation, born out the idiosyncratic genius of a 20th century author? There can be no doubt that a paradoxical thinker as he

was, will naturally produce a paradoxical Paradise; however, for Kafka the idea was to explore the nature of the basic human experience by resorting to a classical cliché, the Paradise. By introducing the Paradise as a common form of experience, he cared much less to preserve the uniqueness of the Paradise, but to illumine what he believed is the highly ambiguous condition humaine. It is the expulsion from, rather the life in the Paradise, that concerns Kafka. By assuming that we may still be continuously in Paradise, he opens the possibility to allow a continuous expulsion from there. His introduction of the Paradise not as an irrevocable loss but as a mundane situation is however not new, as he might have been acquainted with one of the following sources. However, while the Jewish sources to be surveyed below combined the possible achievement *hic et nunc* with paradisaical terminology, they attempted to elevate the human behavior to less than a common form of experience.

I shall examine in the following different conceptualizations, or forms of imagining the nature of the Paradise, which are less mythical than some other found in Jewish mysticism. A perusal of this huge literary corpus shows that someone can encounter as diverse views as believing in the existence of the Paradise on the terrestrial plane, in a place in principle accessible, on the one and,<sup>9</sup> and extreme spiritual interpretations on the other hand.

Both are imaginal constructs, and none have been given any priority here. However, because of the framework of this lecture, I selected some forms of more spiritual and less mythical interpretations, less known in scholarship, as their majority is still extant only in manuscript. I shall attempt to point out the diversity of the mystical explanations, which may be better understood as expressing different models, in our case the theurgical-theosophical one and the ecstatic one. However, before approaching the medieval Kabbalistic material, let me survey some earlier views of Paradise found in Hebrew sources.

## Paradises of Light

Paradise is a preferred place for many of the heavenly tours and different figures in ancient and late antiquity Jewish literature had paid a visit to that imaginary place.<sup>10</sup> This is obvious from the intertestamental literature, and from some instances in rabbinic literature. In corpore or in spiritu, some masters were able to ascend and descend in order to inform the mortals about what happened post-mortem. These mythical tours had already been the topic of learned discussions and I refrain here from repeating the finding of the scholars. I would nevertheless point out that an important issue in ancient Jewish mysticism, which had a huge impact on the development of the medieval Jewish mysticism, the entrance of four sages in the Pardes, the mystical orchard, according to the different ancient versions of this legend, should be interpreted in the context of the

Paradise-visits.<sup>11</sup> Important as this issue is in itself, and for the development of the later texts, some of them to be inspected below, I cannot elaborate here on the importance of this identification.

In the Hebrew Enoch, Metatron revealed to R. Ishmael that after the expulsion of Adam from the Paradise, he and his generation were sitting at the

"entrance of the Garden of Eden in order to look at the image of the stature of the radiance<sup>12</sup> of the Divine Presence, since Her radiance would go from one end of the universe to the other, exceeding the [radiance of] the globe of the sun by 365 thousand times. And everyone who makes use of the radiance of the Divine Presence, on him no flies and gnats did rest, neither was he ill nor suffered he any pain. No demons got power over him, neither were they able to injure him."<sup>13</sup>

The Paradise of light is the alternative some Kabbalists embraced in lieu of the more popular Paradise of the bodies of the pious. As such, Ben Azzai's death is no more than entering the paradisiacal state by his mystical death. Or, to formulate it otherwise: the supernal Pardes, with its radiance of marble stones, was metamorphosed into the radiance of the Shekhinah, which became the luminous Paradise, fascinating the soul; the Paradise of delight became a Paradise of light, and only on the background the overtone of delight is still present. The general attitude of the anonymous Kabbalist to the adventure of Ben Azzai is similar to that of the Heikhalot passage. However, the theory of immersion into and union with the divine radiance adds a dimension that is absent in ancient Jewish mysticism. The effort to cleave to the Divine Presence, which can be easily fostered by Biblical prooftexts, is conceived here as negative. R. Aqiva is the excellent alternative, because he was able to regulate his mystical attainment, while Ben Azzai has lost control and his fascination became the cause both of his supreme mystical attainment and of his annihilation. The emphasis on the necessity to regulate the attachment to both the supernal and mundane worlds conveys the major attitude of the anonymous Kabbalist, in spite his view of the attainment of Ben Azzai as a very high one. In Jungian parlance, the uroboric mysticism, or the introvertive experience which its emphasis on the return to the source and the immersion into an oceanic entity, as presented by the description of Ben Azzai, was rejected in favor of the world-transforming mysticism as exemplified by the figure of R. Aqiva. The medieval Kabbalist preferred to remained attuned to the biblical statement that God cannot be seen while alive; even the possibility to attenuate the achievement by allowing the fact that it is only the radiance and not the divine essence that is contemplated, was not invoked as an excuse. This uneasiness with

the looking at the radiance is to be compared to the hesychastic contemplation of the divine essence. The quintessence of this form of mysticism consists in the achieving a vision of the Divine essence, exposed without any effort of disguising it, and indeed the critique of Balaam, for example, is reminiscent of the attitude of another Kabbalist to the experience of Ben Azzai.

With the beginning of Jewish medieval philosophy, the Midrashic eschatological terminology, informed by some anthropomorphic and corporeal images, underwent substantial metamorphoses under the influence of Neoplatonic spirituality.<sup>14</sup> We may propose three visions of the Paradise in Jewish sources: the geographical one, found since the Bible as part of the nether world; the celestial one, that is not only projected in the supernal world, but also described in terms of light as part of an attempt to spiritualize it by emphasizing the relationship between the retribution and the soul, and less the body. And finally, the spiritual Paradise, which is identical either with a totally intellectual or spiritual being, with whom the human soul or intellect is united; and the Paradise was conceived also the very spiritual experience related to these supernal entities or related to God Himself. It is conspicuous that these three conceptions cannot easily be categorized historically, since none of them disappeared with the emergence of the other understandings of the Paradise. They coexisted not only in different kinds of literature, but also in the same system we can find the traces of two, or more, types of concepts. This typology of the Paradise is related to a process of de-democratisation of the Paradise: while the geographical one is much more open to larger segments of the nation, its subtle metamorphoses are significant only to very restricted circles involved in mystical practices and speculations; If the Rabbinic exoteric writings address the attainment of the righteous, namely those persons who followed the nomic path as it was proposed for the whole people, in the esoteric sources and in the philosophical ones the assumption is that the preoccupation with the much more sophisticated issues, mystical techniques and speculative anomian topics, are opening the way to reaching the spiritual Paradise by elites.

The more spiritual kinds of Paradises are the prerogative of the elite. Initially a Garden of delight, Paradise became a Garden of light, and then an experience of light and mystical delight.

Jewish Neoplatonism was instrumental in providing the view that the Paradise is a metaphor for the experience of a spiritual attainment, eschatological or mystical; Here we are concerned only with the spiritualization of the Paradise by the means of the imagery of light. This kind of imagery is surely not new, and there are some ancient antecedents, as we have already seen above.

However, it was consonant with one of the characteristics of the medieval views of metaphysics, as represented by a strong propensity to

use metaphors of light, which has influenced also Jewish Neoplatonism. The most significant and earliest example of describing the Paradise in terms of a metaphysics of light is found in one of Isaac Israeli's writings where man is described as achieving a union with

"the upper soul, and the illumination by the light of the intellect and the beauty and splendor of wisdom. When attaining this rank, he becomes spiritual, and will be joined in union to the light which is created, without mediator, by<sup>15</sup> the power of God, and will become one that exalts and praises the Creator for ever and in all eternity. This then will be his Paradise<sup>16</sup> and the goodness of his reward, and the bliss of his rest and unsullied beauty."<sup>17</sup>

As A. Altmann and S. Stern have noticed, this interpretation of the Paradise in a Neoplatonic vein is consonant with the Talmudic view on the righteous that enjoys the splendor of the Shekhinah.

The above text was paraphrased in a 12th century writing of R. Joseph ibn Zaddiq<sup>18</sup> and I assume that it serves as a pertinent background for some later discussions in Kabbalah.<sup>19</sup> It is the terminology of light that informs most of the discussions of the emanative processes, both in the texts of Israeli, and that of his disciple, Dunash ibn Tamim and in their Neoplatonic sources in their original and in their Arabic versions. Cleaving to the upper soul, namely the soul of the world, is a definitely Neoplatonic intermediary, that is interpreted in biblical terms, as the place where the human soul enjoys.<sup>20</sup> Neoplatonic spirituality, with its subtle individualistic eschatology so close to the mystical interests, contributed substantially to the later medieval tone of discussion of some eschatological issues.

Last but not least; in what seems to be a manuscript writing of R. Asher ben Meshullam, a late 12th century Provencal writer, Paradise is explicitly identified with God Himself, a move that will be coupled by a parallel development later on in the theosophical Kabbalah.<sup>21</sup>

## Ritual and Personal Paradises

Judaism is a ritualistic form of religion, which assumes that the summum bonum is achieved essentially not by an act of faith, by the correct understanding of the nature of the divine, but mostly by performing some commandments. It is therefore not surprising to find a strong nexus between the performance of the rites and the post-mortem paradisiacal attainment is so obvious. However, in some early Kabbalistic writings composed in Catalonia, the assumption is that the performance of the commandments has not only an accumulative effect on high for the



fate of the souls of the dead, but also in the very present, when the pious souls are endowed by a light stemming from above, as a retribution for her keeping the commandments. In a highly influential passage, Rabbi Ezra of Gerona writes:

"When thou hast eaten and are replete, then thou shall bless the Lord thy God'<sup>22</sup> And the [meaning of the] blessing on the commandments is that when someone performs the commandments he has to bless his Creator for the holiness which he hallowed us by the means of the commandments. The performance of a mitzwah is the light of life. One who acts below maintains and sustains<sup>23</sup> its power<sup>24</sup> [on high] as it is said:<sup>25</sup> 'The commandment is a candle but the Torah is light' and he walks in the ways of light, and he does not depart from it, and he is immersed in it. When the soul is detached from the body, that light draws the soul, being like a magnet to that soul, as it is written:<sup>26</sup> 'He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor, his righteousness endures for ever', because that divine manifestation draws her as it is written<sup>27</sup> 'his horn shall be exalted with honor' namely the splendor of the soul ascends and stands in a supernal and intimate place, within the glory of the Blessed Holy One."<sup>28</sup>

The last part of the quote deals quite plausibly with the souls that become part of the divine glory, in a manner reminiscent of visions of the Paradise in some forms of Jewish and Christian traditions<sup>29</sup>. However, the post-mortem attainment is, in fact only the last conclusion of a path that starts with the very act of performing a commandment, which ensures the descent of a light upon the soul. The soul's immersion in this light is the immediate repercussion of the religious deed. I am not sure if, indeed, this immersion in the ways of light is an anticipated Paradise, and thus we are allowed to introduce the concept of an actual Paradise while the pious man is alive. However, this is conclusion drawn by a late 13th century Catalan Kabbalist, R. Bahya ben Asher, who states that

"the telling of the commandments<sup>30</sup> in the Pentateuch is a sign of the Paradise of the souls because the commandment is a light, and light is a magnet for the soul<sup>31</sup> ... when she [the soul] performs the commandments, the light of the commandment dwells upon her, and this is the Garden of Eden of the souls... everyone who performs the commandment on the low, he cleaves

to its source on high... and when he will separate himself from matter the light of the commandment will enwrap his soul and it is her radiance, her splendor and her Garden of Eden."<sup>32</sup>

Both Kabbalists do not postpone the retribution of the soul to an indefinite future alone; either approached in paradisaical terms or not, the retribution takes place here below, in addition to the future beatific experience after death. Unlike other forms of dealing with the nexus between commandments and Paradise, which assumed that each commandment creates a part of an eschatological garment waiting for the pious in the Paradise<sup>33</sup> I understand the second quote as speaking in its first part about an instantaneous Paradise, realized as soon as someone performs the commandments, though in the second part it deals with the supernal Paradise after death. According to the two Catalan Kabbalists, there is no need for a Kabbalistic intention to accompany the performance, or of any form of Kabbalistic knowledge, in order to deserve the light; this is an automatic retribution. Therefore, the paradisaical attainment is inherent in the very structure of the ritual act, a view that opens the Paradise not only to the expert Kabbalists, but also to everyone who keeps the commandments.

Let me emphasize an interesting moment of these discussions: the souls in Paradise, and even the bodies there, are wrapped by the light of the commandment; the garment is a crucial attainment, which is conspicuously reminiscent of the Midrashic ideas regarding the garment of splendor the first couple enjoyed while in Paradise, and which was lost after the sin.<sup>34</sup> The paradisaical state is therefore not an Edenic nude, but it is represented by a luminous garment. Performance of commandments is therefore a tool to regain the lost splendorous clothes, though this is not a retrieval of a specific garment, but a waving of new clothes.

## **Cultivating the Garden; On Paradise and Kabbalistic Theurgy**

Since the biblical episode dealing with God's planting the Garden, His horticultural experience was conceptualized in various manners.<sup>35</sup> A Midrashic text, preserved in *Genesis Rabba*<sup>36</sup> supplies an interesting hint at the importance of mythic and cosmic trees in ancient Judaism, and the way of their plantation<sup>36</sup>:

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden."<sup>37</sup> This corresponds to the verse: 'The trees of the Lord have their fill; the cedars of Lebanon which he has planted.'<sup>38</sup> R. Hanina said: 'they were like the horns of the locusts, and the Holy One, Blessed be He, uprooted them, and transplanted them into the Garden of Eden.'<sup>39</sup>

An outstanding fact for the understanding of the earlier stages of theosophical Kabbalah is the imagery of a garden in general, that is recurrent in the earliest documents; The book of Bahir is replete with themes connected to horticultural images. In the Geronese Kabbalah, the process of emanation, especially its earliest phase is described by images stemming from the Biblical description of the Paradise. So, for example, R. Ezra of Gerone describes the first stages in the emanative process, namely the emergence of the sefirot from their hidden mode of existence to a more manifest state, that which is connected to the creation of the world, as the uprooting of the trees small as 'horns of the locusts' from their original locus and their transplantation into the Garden of Eden, plausibly a symbol for the sefirah of Hokhmah.<sup>40</sup> Thus, Paradise was conceived as more than an ideal place existing on a supernal plane; it is also a symbol of one of the highest divine manifestations.<sup>41</sup>

The natural tendency of the spiritual entities to ascend to their source is a well-known concept in Neoplatonic thought; this is the reversio, immanent in the essence of things, here applied to the Sefirot. However, the reintegration of rerum ad integrum, which is tantamount with their perfect state, is conceived of here in a rather derogatory way: the 'righteous' a symbol of a Sefirah, is envisioned as taken away - in our context, reabsorbed into its source - because of the presence of evil. It is significant that the evil is connected to human activity, as its antidote is the endeavor to neutralize this tendency by a counteractivity drawing the supernal influx downwards, presumably in order to balance the upward tendency of the Sefirot. I therefore assume that there are two forces acting in the dynamics of the Sefirot: their striving to return to the source after being torn away from there, and the human activity which, when positive, may counteract the ascending movement and, when negative, may contribute to the 'taking away' of the Sefirot. The human interest in maintaining the status quo is easily understandable; only the sefirotic hierarchy can transmit the supernal influx to the lower worlds, and any disturbance in this chain of transmission may have pernicious repercussions on the lower world. Moreover, it was the divine will to uproot the roots of the Sefirot, to plant them in the Garden - namely the lower Sefirot - and to thereby bring about the emergence of the entire sefirotic pleroma. Man and God cooperate in their efforts to sustain an intermediary world which mediates between them; God 'pushes' this structure downwards, while man 'pulls' the influx which counteracts the upwards tendency to return.

In general, many of the theosophical Kabbalists regarded the Paradise as a symbol for the unified world of the sefirot, 'Olam ha-Yihud, whereas the worlds nether than it, the world of separation, 'Olam ha-Perud, just as the rivers separates when they flow out of the Paradise. More on this issue we shall see below in our discussion of Gikatilla's Secret of the Cherubim. However, we are concerned here not with the symbolism of the first

processes of emanation but mainly with the vegetarian symbolism of the lower sefirot which are particularly affected by human activity. In one version of his Commentary on the Talmudic 'Aggadot, R. Ezra elaborates on the symbolism of the two trees of the Paradise as part of his interpretation to the Hagigah text about Elisha's 'Aher's belief in two powers:

"Understand the word 'powers'<sup>142</sup> those two which receive their authority from Teshuvah<sup>43</sup> ... You should know why did Aher say 'two powers' in respect to these two [sefirot] and not the others which are there. And why did they call it 'uprooting the shoots' for turning one thing into two. If you will contemplate the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, you will see that they are here below one, and on high they are two,<sup>44</sup> as it is said: 'And the tree of life is in the middle<sup>45</sup> of the garden'; it is obvious that it was within the garden, as it is said in the Aramaic translation:

'in the middle of the garden'. But was not the tree of knowledge also within the garden? If you assert that it is also in [the middle of the garden] is it possible that both are in the middle of the garden? Here below it is written 'We can eat from the fruit of the trees which are in the middle of the garden'. Therefore, the two of them are one but on high they are two and they should not be separated [from each other] and confer to one of them power without the other. Likewise is the [palm] tree<sup>46</sup> see that its column is one, but its foliage is divided between right and left, one of its part being male the other female; and if both the male and female will be planted, the tree will not survive."<sup>47</sup>

As it stands this passage makes sense: it describes the unity between the two trees in the earthy Paradise, but their distinctiveness in to be found only in the sefirotic realm, where they stand for a male and female power. Apparently these sefirot are Gevurah, the tree of knowledge, the feminine power, and Hesed, the tree of life or the male power. Their unity below points to their unity in diversity on high, just as the male and female together are necessary for survival. Despite the fact that we may distinguish between them, we shall not separate them. Separating the two sefirot above is tantamount, in the virtue of the parable of the palm date, to destruction.

Therefore, the sin of Aher consists not in a misguided experience, or a false theological misunderstanding, but in committing an act which has

deadly implications on the high. Like Adam in the Midrash - though this is not explicated in the text - he separates and thereby he produces death. However, the separation is between two entities that are on the same level: two trees and male and female: None of them is conceived to be the source of the other, and the very fact that they are separated will affect, so it seems to be implied in the text, both of them in the same measure.

R. Ezra of Gerona<sup>48</sup> states that the gathering of roses mentioned in the Song of Songs refers to emanation and to causing the influx to descend downward. The ancient sages, meaning the authors of Genesis Rabba' who were quoted above, designated the emanation of the highest entities and its revelation by the name uprooting. The recurrence of the motif of planting in Genesis is connected by R. Ezra to the pre-existence of mythical trees of the Lord which, so I suppose, were planted as cedars of Lebanon, outside their natural locus. R. Hanina hints at these two stages when he refers to their pre-existence as 'horns of locusts,' which were uprooted and transplanted in the Garden of Eden. The violent act of uprooting is obvious; the transplantation is understood by the Kabbalist as the act of the forced emergence of the Sefirot out of their hidden pre-existence.

Let me adduce now a passage dealing with the theosophy and the theurgy of the Garden of Eden, authored by Rabbi Joseph Gikatilla, in a manuscript treatment entitled The Secret of the Cherubim:

"The secret of Unity is found until the tenth sefirah of Malkhut, and from Malkhut downward there is the secret of separation and the secret of the 'river that goes out of `Eden to water the Garden, and from there it separates and becomes four heads. And from `Eden to the Garden there is the secret of Unity and everything is done by the river that waters the garden-beds of the garden from the emanation from `Eden. Happy is he who knows to unify the branches of the Garden to the river, and the river to the `Eden, then everything becomes a true and perfect union because of him, and behold he is repairing all the pipes and draws the supernal waters throughout the pipes to all the garden-beds and waters the mountains.. and on this man it is said 'and the righteous is the foundation of the world'<sup>49</sup> ... and by him the sefirot were unified and the supernal waters were drawn and running through the pipes of the [divine] will<sup>50</sup> through the channels and water all the garden-beds of the Garden and all the worlds were blessed by him... and because Abraham was keeping the guard of God and drew the blessings through the pipes and the

channels from the `Eden, which is the [sefirah of] Keter, until the Garden, which is Malkhut, then all the worlds were nourished by all the blessings in the world.<sup>1151</sup>

The righteous is therefore the keeper of the Garden as we learn also from another passage from the same treatise

"When a righteous who knows how to unify the true unity is found in the world, and he unifies the branches with the root and waters the garden-beds of the Garden, by<sup>52</sup> him all the worlds are blessed and nourished ... and all this is connected to the man who knows the secret of Malkhut until Keter, and all that is lower than Malkhut is receiving blessing and influx and maintenance each and everyone according to its species and its way. And this is the secret of [the verse] 'Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with Me'<sup>153</sup> .<sup>1154</sup>

The entire sefirotic realm is symbolized by the Garden and the Eden, which stand, respectively, for the last and first sefirah. In other words, Gan `Eden is the symbol of the divine pleroma. The righteous man is conceived as the connoisseur, that knows the secret of the Paradise, its pipes and channels, and also knows how to unify all its components and by ensuring unity, he also creates the sine qua non condition for the the circulation of energy within the divine system, and from there onto the lower worlds. The repair of the divine pleroma is the quintessence of the religious obligation of the righteous, who is described both as the foundation of the world and someone who strengthens the divine system. As it is pointed out in the above quotes implicitly – by the very resort to the terms righteous, and his 'guard' – and more explicitly elsewhere in the same treatise, the regulation of the circuit within the intradivine and extradivine realms depends upon the performance of the commandments. They are the main *modi operandi* of the theurgical Kabbalist. In fact, Gikatilla points to two forms of theurgical operations: one is unification of the lower divine powers to the higher, ensuring a union within the pleroma; then another activity takes place: the descent, or the drawing down of the divine flow from the higher to the lower planes. By filling the last sefirah, an overflow will enrich the infra-divine realms.

The preceding conceptions may be summarized as versions of theosophical-theurgical expansions of the Biblical account of Paradise: God planted it and He commanded Adam to keep it.

Moreover, the ancient description of Jewish esotericism employs the term *Pardes* – a garden – as a designation for esoteric speculations, and 'the cutting of the branches' as a designation for heresy. Accordingly, the

preceding Kabbalistic theosophies can be conceived as an elaborate interpretation of the esoteric significance of the Paradise-account and the theurgical role of human activity. The perfect activity is the maintenance of the sefirotic pleroma in its state oriented towards the world, as in the Talmudic-Midrashic views surveyed elsewhere.<sup>55</sup> This activity maintains the Ma'aseh Bereshit - a symbol of the Sefirot - in its 'exteriorized' state, not allowing it to be reabsorbed into the inmost part of Divinity.

Theurgical Kabbalah is thus conceived as the real maintenance of the divine Garden, as Adam was commanded to do by God. This cultivation of the Garden is an active and ongoing activity, rather than a desire to return to, or attainment of, an anthropological primordial state. The theosophical Paradise aspires not a sublime psychological experience, as the ecstatic Kabbalah would assume, as we shall see in more details in the next paragraph, but a dynamic and ongoing effort to maintain this world in the best status quo.

This is not a 'nostalgia for Paradise,' as finding "oneself always and without effort in the Center of the World, at the heart of reality" is the core of the theosophical Paradise, but the effort to construct it continuously and actively.

By attempting to induce an harmonious relationship between the components in the Garden, the righteous is not imitating Adam, who is the sinner described in Midrash as someone who has cut the branches, but strives to counteracts the pernicious effects of his acts. The commandments, unknown to Adam, are post-Edenic tools revealed in order to repair the disruption within the divine pleroma. From this point of view, theurgy is a non-escapist form of religion, that takes responsibility for the status of the divine powers and their energetic balance. The theurgical Kabbalist does not imitate Adam, as he does not imitate God, by resorting to the commandments in a theurgical manner. This is not a periodical reactualization of the paradisaical order, as Eliade envisions the nostalgia for Paradise,<sup>56</sup> but a continuous effort to sustain the pleroma in its harmonious state. I emphasize the non-periodical aspect of Kabbalistic theurgy, because the stress Eliade has put on the periodical and festive aspects, namely some annual moments of intrusion of the sacred within the secular, in his vision of religion. Thus, though this scholar assumes the momentary recuperation of the primordial, this is not a daily enterprise.

However, like the archaic man in Eliade's description, the theurgical Kabbalist is conceiving himself not in escapist terms, which avoid activity, but as taking responsibility on the cosmic plan.<sup>57</sup>

## Paradise in Ecstatic Kabbalah

The mysterious figure who was the teacher of the founder of ecstatic Kabbalah, a middle 13th century Rabbi Barukh Togarmi, addressed the issue of Paradise in a concise manner, characteristic of the following elaborations in this school. In the short and, as we shall see immediately, enigmatic Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah, the phrase Garden of Eden occurs twice;

"The incantation of the language is the secret of the Garden of Eden, known from the three meals, 26, 65, and 86, incumbent upon the individual to eat on Sabbath, [during] day and night."<sup>58</sup>

This compact passage is based upon a gematria, namely on the affinities between the numerical values of the different phrases constituting this quote. The basic figure is 177, which is the gematria of Gan `Eden on one hand, and the three divine names, the Tetragrammaton, 'Adonai and 'Elohim, on the other; This is also the case of the phrase 'Day and night' - Yomam va-laylah. Moreover, according to a certain way of calculation the phrase 'three meals' shalosh se`udot amounts to 1176, which was understood as  $176+1=177$ , while the phrase hashba`at ha-lashon is 1178, when understood as follows:  $1178=178-1=117$ .<sup>59</sup> What are the conceptual relations between the different elements which are connected with each other by the numerical calculations? The incantation of language is related to the three divine names, this figure pointing to the three meals the Rabbis claimed that should be ritualistically eaten during the day of Sabbath.<sup>60</sup> These three names are available, just as is the possibility to eat the three meals. Thus, the mentioning the Garden of Eden has to do with an experience which is on the one side magical, on the other ritualistic. In other words, the term Paradise is connected to linguistic activities, the incantation and the three divine names, and to the performative ritual of keeping the Sabbath.

The linguistic aspect of Paradise is reinforced in another short discussion, where the "secret of the Garden of `Eden' be-sod gan `eden, is described as numerically tantamount to the biblical phrase be-`av `anan<sup>61</sup>, an expression that was understood as dealing with the divine name of 72 letters, one of the most important names in the mystical technique of Abulafia.<sup>62</sup>

Another version of the first passage is found in Rabbi Joseph Gikatilla's classic Ginnat 'Egoz where he argues that "The three names, whose secrets are 26, 86 and 65, are the secret of the stages of the intellectual degrees, and are called by the general name of Garden of Eden, for by means of their grasp one enters the Garden of Eden while alive."<sup>63</sup>



It is hard to know whether the additional elements of this passage are Gikatilla's inventions or explications of Togarmi's dense passage. In any case, here it is an intellectual experience that is meant, one which allows someone to enter Paradise alive.

This is an intellectual Paradise, obtained while alive by means of a linguistic activity - the three divine names<sup>64</sup> The three divine names stand here, implicitly, for the three meals, which constitute the intellectual ladder, which is tantamount to Paradise. Thus, Paradise is not a place, neither an experience which comes after the three names or meals, but is identical to them. In fact, the title of this book means "The Garden of the Walnut" a phrase that is interpreted in the opening poem as pointing to a garden where there is a tree of life and one of knowledge, thus a Paradise.

Therefore, in addition to a magical and a ritualistic, there is also an intellectual activity, that is tantamount to Paradise. Nothing in this book hints that this intellectual experience is utopian, difficult or is merely a matter of nostalgia.<sup>65</sup>

Consequently, there are three ways of attaining Paradise while alive: the ritualistic, the magical-linguistic and the intellectual.

In a series of Kabbalistic writings, composed by Abraham Abulafia, the founder of ecstatic Kabbalah, many of the elements found in the two texts mentioned above recur, in a much more elaborated version. Again, it is difficult to assess what is new in these elaborations, and what is an explication. Abulafia was quite an original thinker, capable to invent the most bizarre ideas under the garb of numerical calculations. Let me adduce some of his treatment of the Garden of Eden, which continue the thread of the earlier discussions:

"The Garden of Eden and Geheinna differ from each other, and ve-dam, which is ha-Adam is preponderating between them and this decision is in accordance to the language... and the secret ... of three special names hinted at ... is an allusion... and so also the secret of the Garden of Eden, three degrees,<sup>66</sup> three meals, three names, according to which the Gadan Na',<sup>67</sup> which is a vapor in a cloud,<sup>68</sup> and it is a subtle matter<sup>69</sup> ... day and night."<sup>70</sup>

The paradoxical context of the discussion of Paradise, mentioned here together with the Geheinna, will be discussed below in more details. Otherwise, Abulafia repeated most of the themes already hinted at earlier: language, meals, names, degrees, day and night.

However, what seems to be crucial in Abulafia's system is not only an exhibition of mathematical agility; he was much more concerned with forms of ecstatic experiences, which may be achieved now.

Indeed, one of his most important handbooks, which describes a technique to reach such an experience, is entitled Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba', the 'Life of the World to Come' namely the description of the technique leading to a beatific experience, to be achieved while alive. This book has little to do with post-mortem visions but with those to be enjoyed in this world. In the introduction to this book he writes:

"The intention of all these sacred names is to apprehend<sup>71</sup> the three degrees, designated in our tradition as three meals, known from the secret of ha-Yom, ha-Yom, ha-Yom, as it is said<sup>72</sup> 'Gather it today for today is a Sabbath of the Lord. Today you will not find it in the field'. And the secret of the Manna is the secret of the descending water<sup>73</sup> and the descending dew<sup>74</sup>."<sup>75</sup>

For Abulafia, the mentioning of the divine names is, by no means, an exegetical issue, provoked by the accidental numerical equation to Gan 'Eden; the divine names are the techniques to reach a prophetic experience, and this search and the confidence in the possibility of its attainment constitute the core of Abulafia's book. Paradise is therefore, not only an important term, whose connotation adds a lustre on the discussion, but the term for the highest religious experience, which should be achieved now. Abulafia's insistence on the term ha-Yom, today, has to do with the feeling of emergency, that is characteristic of his mystical system.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, as an analysis of the occurrences of the term 'to-day' shows, in the ecstatic Kabbalist's writings it stands not for the transient but for the ever present and enduring experiences.<sup>77</sup>

The various versions of the relation between the three divine names are linguistically oriented. The intellectual aspects were not discussed above though they appear in many other Abulafian texts. However, a philosophical tradition different from the Neoplatonic one analyzed above, has nourished some other important discussions in Abulafia's texts. According to Maimonides, the Talmudic concept of Pardes, orchard which produced the terms Paradise, was identified with the Aristotelian concept of metaphysics, understood as theology, Hokhmat ha-'Elohut.<sup>78</sup> In an illuminating remark Berman points to a connection between Paradise and Pardes; "Paradise (gan 'eden, pardes) is identical with theoretical speculation".<sup>79</sup> This important, but unfortunately brief remark is worthwhile of a more comprehensive investigation. The theoretical speculation mentioned by Berman are not specified, beyond his own hint at the Pardes, which stands, in Maimonides' earlier terminology, for the Account of Creation and that of the Chariot, namely issue related to Aristotelian physics and metaphysics. Though I am confident that Berman is correct, his hint as to the nature of the speculations is, unfortunately, not corroborated by explicit statements of Maimonides himself; I am not

aware of an explicit affinity between Adam's perfect intellection and topics related to the Pardes legend, in Maimonides' Guide. Thus it is necessary to resort to indirect confirmations of possible relations between Pardes and Paradise in Maimonides' specific conceptual approach. A follower of Maimonides' thought explicated the nexus noticed by Berman; a generation after Maimonides' death, we read in rabbi Jacob Anatoli,

"It seems to me that the view of the sages, blessed be their memory, was that the Paradise is a name designating all the sciences<sup>80</sup> and it was called in their nomenclature Pardes, as it is said "four [sages] entered the Pardes".<sup>81</sup>

In Abulafia's writings, the nexus between Paradise, Pardes, theology and metaphysics is even more conspicuous.<sup>82</sup> Abulafia approaches the Pardes-story, dealing with ancient Jewish masters, as if it is applicable to contemporaries, without leaving the impression that the Pardes story is the patrimony of the past. With him, like with Maimonides, the Pardes is related to metaphysics:

"You know what happened to the four sages of Israel, as it was said on them: Four entered the Pardes, which is a name for the divine science<sup>83</sup> which is from the existence of the delight<sup>84</sup> and so did the gentiles call the Garden of Eden, Paradiso, whose meaning is self-evident, that is a place of delight. It means that everything that someone desires to attain and he attains it, he remains some time with this attainment and [then] he is disgusted by it. This happens to everything that has some deficiency."<sup>85</sup>

Entering the Pardes implies two forms of experiences: a positive one, of delight and one of disgust. Pardes, just as in the ancient versions of the story in rabbinic and Heikhalot literatures, may culminate in either a positive or a negative experience. The positive one, is designated here as Gan `Eden and Paradiso. Dealing with theology, which means an experiential meeting with God<sup>86</sup> is a matter of delight. The experience of the Pardes is interpreted by Abulafia as an everlasting experience. Whereas in the case of other attainments the delight is only temporary and it turns, ultimately, into disgust, in the case of the Paradise, namely metaphysics, the delight is constant and uninterrupted. The knowledge of reality, of the nature of existence, is the quintessence of the Pardes experience and Abulafia is relatively faithfully following Maimonides' conception of metaphysics. However, in contrast to the great eagle, Abulafia does not include in this definition of the Pardes here the Aristotelian physics. Likewise, the emphasis on delight in connection to

the act of cognition related to metaphysics is characteristic to his vision of the mystical experience as culminating in delight,<sup>87</sup> a topic which would not have delighted Maimonides himself. The mention of the feeling of delight may be regarded as related to actual experiences of Abulafia, for whom the Pardes might represent not only an authoritative legend but also an expression of his own experience, just as it happened in the cases of his followers.

Here, as in one of the earlier discussions, Paradise is to be understood as part of a broader context, which includes also the opposite theme of Geheinna, just as delight and disgust are mentioned here together. In an even more radical manner it is found in another treatise of Abulafia's:

"The account of Creation and the account of the Chariot are like male and female and so is 'Eretz,<sup>89</sup> Gan `Eden and Geheinna, that are two attributes, that God, blessed be He, rules over reality by their means. One of them is called the seat of Glory, the other the angel of death. And behold, at the end of time, the Shekhinah will dwell onto Israel... and redemption will start."<sup>90</sup>

It should be emphasized that despite the eschatological color of this passage, I have my doubts if indeed the Paradise is to be connected to an Endzeit in the strict sense of the word. The end of time, `et qetz, indeed has this meaning in the Bible; however, in Abulafia's writings it often stands for the moment of the spiritual awakening, as he interprets the term qetz as yeqitzah.<sup>91</sup> If this is the case, the Edenic experience is connected not to a date in historical time, but with a moment in human spiritual progress. Likewise, the angel of death in Abulafia has nothing to do with the mythical figure but is a negative inclination in man. Thus, the fluctuation between Paradise and Geheinna has nothing to do with the judgement after death, but with human behavior and decision now. Elsewhere in the same treatise, Abulafia writes:

"Some of those who entered in the Pardes become perfect, and some of them degenerated, and the secret of Pardes is, from one aspect Gan `Eden and from another side it is Geheinna, and Shemad,<sup>92</sup> and you should know that Gan `Eden and Geheinna are indubitably on Earth."<sup>93</sup>

Therefore, both Paradise and Hell are on earth, and they point not only to divine modes of action, but also to two ways someone chooses to behave. This dialectical vision of the Paradise is inherited from some succinct remarks found in Rabbi Barukh Togarmi's Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah. The topic of the Garden of Eden is presented as pointing to two different limbs and forms of action: mouth and penis, the positive and

negative copulations, two mouths, Jew and Gentile, all of which are numerically equivalent to 177.<sup>94</sup> Thus, Abulafia's dialectical understanding of Paradise is an elaboration of an approach already existent in nuce in his master's writing. Provided that Abulafia speaks about mundane existence, where the choice between an instantaneous Paradise or Hell is possible, he comes closer to Kafka more than any of the Kabbalists.

Paradise, for him was an extreme, though perhaps not the more perfect human intellectual experience, and any defect in this mental process is to be considered as the way to Hell.

Let me introduce the more intellectualistic approach to Paradise in Abulafia's writings:

"It is known that the truth of the attainment of reality is the comprehension of the divine name, and by its means he will comprehend the commandments, and they point to the Agent Intellect<sup>95</sup> because the comprehension of the Agent Intellect is similar to a candle,<sup>96</sup> which is a 'river'<sup>97</sup> that goes out of Eden'... be careful to the wisdom that emerges from the combination found in the letters [available] to whomever knows how to combine them, because this is the goal of the wisdom of the man who understands the divine name<sup>98</sup> ... because the comprehension of the Agent Intellect, found within the 22 holy letters, comprises all the positive and negative commandments, and it is the candle that illumines to every man and is 'the river that goes out of Eden to water the garden'<sup>99</sup> and it shows that within the 22 letters the comprehension of the name is found, and it is, in its entirety, [emerging] out of the combinations of letters, and you will find truly that out of the combination of letters, the known, the knower and knowledge [are one] ... and whoever comprehends the Agent Intellect gains the life of the world to come and belongs to the secret of the angels of the living God."<sup>100</sup>

The river emerging from Eden and watering the Garden is, quite plausibly, the intellectual flow that descends from the Agent Intellect, which is separated from matter, and is collected by the human intellect. This process is tantamount to the phenomenon of prophecy, which reflects, following Maimonides, the Aristotelian noetic process of representation of the intellectual by the means of the imaginative capacity, and by adding another Aristotelian view, which assumes the identity between the knower, the known and the knowledge, in the

moment of intellection. Thus, the Garden is envisioned as the human intellect or person, the Eden, the separated Intellect. The later is conceived, following the medieval Aristotelian cosmology, as being available always to those who know who, in the system of Abulafia are those who resort to the technique of combining letters, or the divine names. This technique is conceived to induce a transformation that changes the human into an angelic being, namely into an intellectual entity.<sup>101</sup> Here we have the explication of the function of language and divine names as means to attain the meals, namely the affinities to the Agent Intellect.

In another discussion of the untitled treatise the three divine names are mentioned in a discussion that portrays a vision:

"I am the angel of the God of the hosts, so and so, and it is the secret of Gan `Eden that account to three names, YHWH 'Adonai 'Elohim, whose vowels are the prince of Gan `Eden'<sup>102</sup> ... and he will tell him: 'I am the tree of life, the Garden in Eden from the East.' And he will understand that God has sent to him His angel in order to help him by instruction, and to accustom him in the strong love of the Creator, by announcing to him the truth of the essence of the tree of life that is within the Garden, and he is the 'prince of Gan `Eden'."<sup>103</sup>

I see in this passage the clue for at least some of the elements recurring in many of the earlier passages from the ecstatic Kabbalah. The above discussions could be understood as hermeneutical games, which indulged in numerical calculations as part of an intellectual hypertrophy. Here, however, we face a kind of instruction, which may well be also a confession concerning an angelic revelation which is presented as the source of the numerical nexus between the three divine names and Gan `Eden.

Moreover, the angel presents itself expressly as the tree of life and as the Garden of Eden. Therefore, Paradise is not only a label for an individual experience, but also is hypostatized as an angelic figure. Provided the identity between the three names and Gan `Eden, in one of the quotes above, we may assume that the names that serve as part of a technique are also envisioned in a mystical experience. Indeed also in another case in Abulafia's writings, the divine names used as part of a technique, appear in the vision of the mystic.<sup>104</sup> In other words, the Agent Intellect materializes itself in the imagination of the ecstatic Kabbalist in the form of names and describes itself as the Garden of Eden.

Let me address an aspect that is not conspicuous but nevertheless important for the understanding of the implications of the above passage. The Agent Intellect is an intellectual entity that is active all the time,

meaning that it pulsates forms into the world. The possibility to cleave to it is opened to anyone who is able to purify his mind and become receptive of the intellectual influx, which is afterwards translated by the human imagination in visual or auditory forms. This is the theory of prophecy exposed by Maimonides and adopted, with many linguistic additions, by Abraham Abulafia.<sup>105</sup> The Agent Intellect has been designated by Maimonides as the prince of the world, and Abulafia has used the term Prince in many of his writings, in more complex expressions like the Prince of the Face, in order to point to the Agent Intellect.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, the resort to the term Prince, Sar, together with Gan `Eden may foster the above interpretation of the passage, as an intellectual and prophetic experience.

To resort to more mythological terms: while in the theosophical Kabbalah Paradise is an objective complex of powers, toward which the human acts and intentions should be directed, and while in the common mythical descriptions the sacred person is visiting the supernal Paradise, in ecstatic Kabbalah Paradise is visiting the mystic. No ascent to other geographical realms, no transcendence of bodily existence, but a realization here and now, while the soul and intellect are still connected to the body. Moreover, the revelation of the prince of the Paradise should be understood as the imaginative projection of the human faculties, and as such, it is the Kabbalist himself that is creating the imaginative structure he calls it by the name Prince of the Paradise. In the general structure of Abulafia's Kabbalah, the revelatory experience, conceived to be part of the prophetic revelation, means also an act of angelization, which is explicitly also an act of redemption, since the mystic becomes, during the ecstatic experience the Messiah, at least the Messiah of himself. Thus, the paradisaical experience is as much a return to the beginning as it is the anticipation of the eschatological end.

However, for Abulafia, both converge in the atemporal present of the mystical experience. Like the more traditional views of the Messiah waiting in the supernal Paradise for the moment of his advent, Abulafia's mystic is creating his Paradise by resorting to a mystical technique and so becomes the Messiah within it.

## **Paradise as the Human Body**

We have seen above the allegory of the Paradise as pointing to a revelation stemming from a supernal, intellectual world to the mystic. As such, the mystic experiences directly a contact with the entity he imagines to be the Paradise. However, in several other discussions in ecstatic Kabbalah Paradise is conceived to be even more immediately available. So, for example, we read in one of Abulafia's commentaries on Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed, that "The secret of GaN is [the acronym of] Guf and Nefesh and the divine science is found in both, and it

is likewise the numerical equivalence between ha-Hokhmah ha-'Elohit and ha-guf ve-ha-nefesh.<sup>107</sup> Gan means a place where there are different forms of vegetation. And so is the brain, the place which receives different forms of concepts.<sup>108</sup> And there are witnesses, namely the two trees, coming from it and telling us its powers... And see that Eden is Me'id<sup>109</sup> ... one tree adds wisdom and the other adds passion<sup>110</sup> "111

This is, again, a compact passage, reminiscent of the compactness of Abulafia's master, Barukh Togarmi. Like the latter's passage dealt with above, also Abulafia's passage here is a web of numerical calculations, which must be decoded in order to fathom the significance of the text. I have done so in the notes above. Let me now address the more conceptual aspects of the passage. The Garden is conceived now as an intrahuman entity: The Garden is the brain, the two trees are two human forms of action.

What is surprising is the identity of the divine science, namely metaphysics or theology, with the human aggregate of body and soul. This is one of the most audacious concepts in the frame work of medieval understanding of this phrase. I am not sure that I can sufficiently account for such a view, but in any case, it may be easier understood as the result of the identity between Pardes=metaphysics=Paradise. In the moment that last term was internalized, and identified with the human person, also the second term was brought into the same net of impersonalization. Indeed, the most remote reality, become the most available one.

In Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba' the body-garden imagery is somewhat different from that described in the above passage. Now, the soul is the 'Eden, which is not part of the Garden:

"The body is like a garden, which is the master of vegetation, and the soul is 'Eden, which is the master of delights,<sup>112</sup> and the body is planted in it. The secret of Gan 'Eden is 'Ed naggen [a witness is playing],<sup>113</sup> for prophecy dwells when 'Eved naggen [the servant plays], e.g., 'when the minstrel played<sup>114</sup> as in the case of Elisha."<sup>115</sup>

Gan 'Eden in gematria equals 'Ed naggen. The witness mentioned here is probably Metatron, the angelic name for the Agent Intellect, which induces the prophetic, or mystical experience.<sup>116</sup>

The body of the mystic is conceived of as the Paradise watered by the waters of the divine, or intellectual effluence, after his resorting to the mystical techniques, which in Abulafia's writings include also melodies.

If we have deciphered Abulafia's meaning correctly, we are confronted here with the widespread analogy of man to the kinnor or nevel upon which God, or the Agent Intellect, plays music; This view would imply another vision of the Edenic experience: when God, or the Agent Intellect, take possession of the human body and plays upon it, like



a player does with a musical instrument, man undergoes a paradisaical experience. This seems to be the implication of another passage found in Abulafia's last book:

"Just as the 'owner of a garden' has the power to water the garden at will by means of rivers, so does the one making music with the Name have the power to water at will his limbs by means of his soul, by means of the Almighty, Blessed Name; and this is [the meaning of] 'and it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him'<sup>117</sup> - this is the kinnor hung above David's bed, which used to play of itself and 'praise Him with the nevel and kinnor'<sup>118</sup>.<sup>119</sup> But this would only be after receiving the divine effluence, which is called the seventy-two letter name,<sup>120</sup> together with the understanding of its paths."<sup>121</sup>

Again the mystical technique, dependent upon the combinations of letters of the divine name of 72 letters - the paths mentioned at the end of the quote - is instrumental in bringing about the divine spirit. The human body, envisioned here especially as limbs, is described as a garden, like in some of the above quotes in this paragraph.

## Concluding Remarks

Conceptualizations of Paradise in the Kabbalistic systems we had surveyed are attempts to imagine experiences of plenitude within parameters of each and every mystical system; Each of them has its special Paradise, which fits the basic model that informs its system. Different as the two models inspected above are, they represent attempts to offer alternatives to the biblical and talmudic views of Paradise as a geographical space, on earth or on high. Both ecstatic Kabbalah and the theosophical-theurgical one spiritualized Paradise: one by projecting it within the intellectual sphere, either as a cosmic intellect or a human spiritual experience, the other by projecting within the divine realm. These forms of spiritualization, anthropocentric or theocentric rendered Paradise available, unlike the geographical Paradise, whose place was unknown, and in any case a very dangerous place to enter. What is shared by all those discussions is the common belief that the paradisaical experiences are possible and that there are authoritative techniques to attain them, though none of them would explicitly reduce the concept of Paradise solely to experiences immanent in this world.

A comparison between the different texts quoted above, which are naturally fragmentary, selective and to a certain extent even accidental, may nevertheless teach something about the various modes of expressions

characteristic of the different Kabbalistic models. The internalization of the Paradise experience, which reduces the mythical cargo of the classical texts, reduced also the colorful and rich imagery of the Paradise myths, and produces much more personalized Paradises. Unlike the Hasidic masters, who would speak about personal Paradises<sup>122</sup>, the systematic visions, stemming from the various broader philosophical systems, Aristotelian or Neoplatonic, restricted the ideal to one, monolithic form of experience, intellectual, spiritual or luminous. A part of the claims for plenitude stems from the discovery of types of spiritual experiences that transcend place and time, and are available to everyone who masters the comprehensive worldview. Thus performance is indeed found in these internal versions of Paradise, an external drama is nevertheless absent. Like in many other cases, that of the Golem for example, the Kabbalistic discussions were much more under the spell of exposing a certain view or motivating a certain type of behavior, than creating complex plots that will become more sophisticated literary works.

The mythical-theurgical visions of Paradise do, however, minimize the personal experience in favor of constructing an 'objective' structure, which is related not only to acts of religious performance, but also related to interactive concepts, which imagine reciprocal affinities, which portray a Garden cultivated by both the human acts and intra-divine processes.

Let me attempt to address the question of the easiness of entering the Paradise, within a broader comparative context. In Judaism, there were two 'expulsions': one from the Paradise, the other from the Land of Israel and the destruction of the Temple.<sup>123</sup> The 'templar expulsion' was much more serious, as some of the major commandments in Judaism, like the sacrifices of the priests in the Temple, could no more be performed. The Rabbinic *historia sacra* was much more concerned with this second expulsion from the Temple, which affected the mode of collective Jewish religiosity, rather than with bemoaning the loss of Adam's perfection, which was conceived to have been repaired by the Sinaitic revelation. Thus, the paradisaical experience, which is basically personal, was much easier adopted to individualistic attainments nourished by Greek forms of thought. This individual redemption here and now, even if not final, allows a plenitude that is not dependent on political and military achievements related to the messianic era, envisioned as conducive to the rebuilding of the Temple. This spiritual interpretation of the Paradise does not preclude a similar interpretation of Messianism as a spiritual event, rather than as apolitical one. Indeed, those who would emphasize the spiritual Paradise, would attribute a less significant role to messianism in general, or, as is the case of Abraham Abulafia, would offer a strong spiritual version of messianism in addition to its political aspects. Christianity has been critical toward the Temple of the ritual, and conceived the main problem of humanity the repair of Adam's sin, which was envisaged as the goal of Jesus' suffering. This projection of the

restoring of the paradisaical situation by the 'last Adam' may account why after his vicarious suffering the question of regaining the Paradise is much more a matter of identification by faith with the 'last man', than an attempt to reexperience the experience of the first Adam. A marginal problem in Rabbinic Judaism, Paradise become more significant in medieval forms of this religion concerned as they were more with questions of origins, of ideal behavior and of individual religiosity. This is very conspicuous in Abraham Abulafia, who, despite of his messianic claim, did not indulge in discussions on the nature of the Temple, its rituals and reconstruction, but was concerned much more with Adamic issues<sup>124</sup>.

If the Rabbinic architecture of Paradise - and under its influence also some Kabbalistic descriptions - is a construct of many mansions belonging to the various degrees of righteous, in some medieval sources, the question of the nature of Paradise becomes much more complex: someone may enjoy his Paradise here below on the one hand, while in other forms of intellectual eschatologies, there is indeed a serious quandary about the possibility of individual immortality. The spiritualization of the Paradise involved, automatically, also its accessibility for encounters of the elite who were able to intensify the spiritual life while alive.

One last remark on way the phrase 'Garden of Eden' functioned in all the above passages. Either as a symbol of the sefirotic pleroma, as an allegory of the manifestation of the Agent Intellect, or as a description of the human body, it is an imaginary construct that is quite vague even in those mythical descriptions, which assumed much more defined meanings which are informed both by the linguistic structure of the phrase and the specific concepts that constitute the different Kabbalistic systems. The mythical views of Paradise have been both enriched by its more mystical, and the differently mythical understandings, and also imprisoned by the conceptual components of these systems. Since the architecture of the Paradise was not advanced by those discussions, neither the minimalist descriptions of Bible play any significant role in the above discussions, we shall be aware of the centrality of the linguistic structure as informing some of the aspects of the above passages: The gematria in ecstatic Kabbalah, or the strong distinction between Gan as a symbol of Malkhut, and 'Eden as Keter in Gikatilla's Secret of the Cherubim.

To a great extent, the Paradises mentioned above are linguistic constructs, based on numerical, allegorical or symbolic readings of the Hebrew terms. As such, it was easier to communicate the significance of the Paradise, - because of the calculations which can be understood by everyone - modest as this information may be - while leaving for each of the readers to indulge, if he wishes, into the imaginary aspects of the concept of Paradise, to be fleshed out by his own imagination. Architectural aspects were much less important in the mystical systems, though for sure they were present, like in the book of the Zohar, and the

writings of Moses de Leon.<sup>125</sup> Significantly enough, in the book of Zohar, many important events in which God and the souls of the righteous are described as promenading in the Paradise, especially during midnight, described as an objective ontic realm in which various dramas take place.

Language, like ritual, were easily available tools, which every mystic could afford, and created by their means his personal Paradise.

Given the deep conviction in the sanctity of both Hebrew language and the Jewish ritual, the achievement of Paradise-experiences was, therefore, not conceived of as an exceptional attainment but rather as an encounter with the spiritual realm as part of some of the Kabbalists' belief in the possibility to achieve moments of perfection and plenitude here and now. It is a special type of anthropology that informs the different forms of perfection and plenitude: one that believes that not only is man not fallen, but he is, due to religious traditions, capable to realize now and here the outmost potential of human experience. No need to return to the beginning, a la Eliade, no important allowance for a spiritual meaning of the expectation for the end, a la Scholem. Both assumed the loss or the unavailability of the Paradise in the present, and assumed that mystics boked in different temporary directions in order to fiind it.

From the few examples adduced above, it seems that some Jewish mystics, and I assume that also other not discussed here, imagined that they are capable to achieve Paradisical experiences in the present,<sup>126</sup> though some other, like many of their contemporaries in Europe, were much more concerned with the location of and the possibility to reach terrestrial Paradises.<sup>127</sup> The latter: Jews Christian or Muslims, continue much earlier mythical visions of Paradises more attuned to preaxial modes of religiosities. Some of the views discussed above, especially the philosophical and the ecstatic ones, are more consonant to axial modalities of religion.

Both approaches coexisted in the diversified literatures called Kabbalah and Hasidism.<sup>128</sup> Thus, the search for intense mystical experiences among some of the Kabbalists, and Hasidic masters since mid-18th century, expanded significantly the semantic field of Paradise, in a manner they did to a variety of other main religious topics like Messiah<sup>129</sup>, the land of Israel,<sup>130</sup> or the ten sefirot.<sup>131</sup> These new, personalized and existential interpretations of institutionalized values should be understood as the internalization of the emphasis on the importance of the inner processes found in Greek philosophy, in its Arabic and Jewish reverberations, and in their reverberations in some Kabbalistic and Hasidic masters. This is but one more example for what may be described as an intercorporeal interpretation, a phenomenon which assumes that main values from one conceptual corpus have an impact on values found in another, independent corpus. The ancient, preaxial concepts of Paradise, itself a word stemming from Persian were strongly reinterpreted

by axial concepts stemming from a variety of ancient Greek and Hellenistic modes of thought.<sup>132</sup>

## Notes

- 1 On the concept of plenitude see the interesting observations of Giles Durand, *Figures mythiques et visages de l'oeuvre, De la Mythocritique a la Mythanalyse*, (Dunod, Paris, 1992), 78, 337; See also M. Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1998), 283-289; M. Idel, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 2002), 423-427.
- 2 Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, (Schocken Books, New York, 1972), 35. See also Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, 7, 202.
- 3 See Moshe Idel, "'Unio Mystica' as a Criterion: Some Observations on 'Hegelian' Phenomenologies of Jewish Mysticism," in Steven Chase (ed.), *Doors of Understanding, Conversations in Global Spirituality in Honor of Ewert Cousins* (Franciscan Press, Quincy, 1997), 305-333.
- 4 Mircea Eliade, *Images & Symbols, Studies in Religious Symbolism*, tr. P. Mairet, (A Search Book: Sheed and Ward, New York, 1969), 55. The same passage is also printed in Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, (A Meridian Book, New York, 1972), 382-383.
- 5 Mircea Eliade, *Images & Symbols*, 16-18. On Paradise and nostalgia from another point of view see Jean Delumeau, *Une histoire du paradis, Le jardin des delices*, (Fayard, Paris, 1992), ch. VI. For a Jungian interpretation of the Paradise as an archetype see Mario A. Jacoby, *Longing for Paradise, Psychological Perspectives on an Archetype*, tr. Myron B. Gubitz, (Sigo Press, Boston, 1985).
- 6 See also Mircea Eliade, *The Quest, History and Meaning in Religion*, (Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1969), 111-188 and Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane, The Nature of Religion*, tr. W.R. Trask, (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1961), 92-94.
- 7 For allegorical interpretations of the Paradise in the Jewish Middle Ages see the study of Shalom Rosenberg, "The Return to the Paradise", in *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, (Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, 1982), 78-86 (Hebrew); on the Garden of Eden in Maimonides's allegorical approach see Sara Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides' Interpretation of the Adam Stories in Genesis*, (Reuven Mass, Jerusalem, 1986), 264-99 (Hebrew).
- 8 Franz Kafka, *Parables and Paradoxes*, (Schocken Books, New York, 1966), 29.
9. Moshe Idel, "The Journey to the Paradise, The Metamorphosis of a Motif from the Greek Myth to Judaism", *Jerusalem Studies in Folklore*, vol. II (1982), 7-16 (Hebrew).
- 10 See, e.g. the collection of articles edited by J.J. Collins - M. Fishbane, *Death, Ecstasy, and the Other Worldly Journeys*, (SUNY Press, Albany, 1995), Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1993) and the collection of articles edited by C. Kappler, *Apocalypses et voyages dans l'au-dela* (Le Cerf, Paris, 1987).
- 11 See Michael Stone, "Paradise in 4 Ezra IV:8 and VII:36, VIII:52," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. XVII (1966), 85-88.
- 12 According to the book of Adam and Eve, a first century A.D. treatise, Adam has seen, before he was expelled from the Paradise, a quasi-Merkavah vision, during

which he has praised God as "true Light gleaming above all light[s]"; cf. David Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, (Mohr, Tuebingen, 1988), 97 .

13 Odeberg, Ch. IV, Hebrew part, 8-9, English part, 14-15. I did not follow Odeberg's translation on several points. See also Charles Mopsik, *Le Livre Hebrew d'Henoch*, (Verdier, Lagrasse, 1989), 102-103, Ira Chernus, *Mysticism and Rabbinic Judaism*, (De Gruyter, New York, Berlin, 1982), 75-76. See also below another passage related to the immunity to injuries due to the radiance of the Shekhinah. See also below note 122 .

14 See e. g. ibn Gabirol's and R. Abraham ibn Ezra's interpretation of 'Olam ha-Ba', the world-to-come, as the state of spiritual union of the intellectual soul with the separate intellects; cf. Elliot R. Wolfson, "God, the Demiurge, and the Intellect," *REJ*, vol. 149 (1990), 95.

15 According to the complete Hebrew version printed by H. Hirschfeld in *Festschrift zum achtzigsten Geburtstag Moritz Steinschneider*, (Leipzig, 1896), 133, it is possible to translate also "created from the power of God". This passage does not occur in the fragments published by Alexander Altmann, "Isaac Israeli's Book of Definitions: Some Fragments of a Second Hebrew Translation," *Journal of Semitic Studies*, vol. II (1957), 232-242 .

16 Gan 'Edno. In the Hebrew version of Ibn Zaddiq's Microcosmos, influenced as it was by Israeli's text, [see note 18 below], it is written Ginah, 'Her Garden' and it may reflect the Arabic term for Paradise, Jannah. Another identification of the Paradise and light is found in Adolf Poznanski (ed), R. Abraham bar Hiyya's *Megilat ha-Megalleh*, (Mekize Nirdamim, Berlin, 1924), 16-17(Hebrew); the vision of Paradise as light occurs already in the hymns of St. Ephrem the Syrian, where there are many Jewish influences; see Nicolas Sed, "Les hymnes sur le paradis du Saint Ephrem et les traditions juives," *Le Museon*, vol. 81 (1968), 482-487 .

17 See *Sefer ha-Gedarim*, the Book of Definitions, originally written in Arabic but preserved in a full Latin and Hebrew translation and in another, partial Hebrew one .See Alexander Altmann and Samuel Stern, *Isaac Israeli, A Neoplatonic Philosopher*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1958), 25-26. See also Samuel Stern, *Isaac Israeli, A Neoplatonic Philosopher*, 192 .

18 S. Horovitz (ed), *Sefer ha-'Olam ha-Qatan*, (Breslau, 1903 ), 76-79 .

19 See below, the text of R. Bahya ben Asher .

20 See H.J. Blumenthal, "Soul, World Soul and Individual Soul in Plotinus," in *Le Neoplatonisme*, (Paris, 1971), 55-66; Paul E. Walker, "The Universal Soul and the Particular Soul in Isma'ili Neoplatonism," in P. Morewedge (ed.), *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, (SUNY Press, Albany, 1992), 149-165; Bernard McGinn, "The Role of the 'Anima Mundi' as Mediator Between the Divine and Created Realms in the Twelfth Century," in J.J. Collins, M. Fishbane (eds.), *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Wordly Journeys* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1995), 289-315; Alexander Altmann, "The Ladder of Ascension," *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem* , (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1967), 1-32 .

21 See the *Commentary on the Ten Commandments*, Ms. Oxford-Bodeliana 1609, fol. 76a. On this author and another text from this manuscript belonging to the same author from the same manuscript see Moshe Idel, "A Fragment of R. Asher ben Meshullam of Lunel's Commentary on Berakhot," Qovetz 'al Yad, *Minora Manuscripta Hebraica*, vol. XI [XXI] (Mekize Nirdamim, Jerusalem, 1985), part I, 77-88 (Hebrew).

22 Deuteronomy 8:10 .

- 23 meqayyem u-ma' amid. This expression is found already in the book of Bahir though in the context of God's presence and maintenance of divine powers .
- 24 kohah .
- 25 Proverbs 6:23 .
- 26 Psalms 112:9 .
- 27 Psalms 112:9
- 28 See Commentary on Taryag Mizvot, printed at the end of the Commentary on Songs of Songs, attributed to Nahmanides, in H. D. Chavel (ed.), *Kitvei ha-Ramban* (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1964), vol. II, 524. For more on this text see M. Idel, "In the Light of Life. An Inquiry in Kabbalistic Eschatology," in I.M Gafni, A. Ravitzky (eds.), *Sanctity of Life and Martyrdom. Studies in Memory of Amir Yekutiel*, (The Zalman Shazar Center, Jerusalem, 1992), 192-195 (Hebrew).
- 29 I.M Gafni, A. Ravitzky (eds.), *Sanctity of Life and Martyrdom. Studies in Memory of Amir Yekutiel*, 207-211 and note 16 above and note 122 below.
- 30 Sippur ha-mitzvot .
- 31 See the text quoted above from R. Ezra .
- 32 See his *Commentary on the Treatise of the Fathers*, ed. Ch. D. Chavel, *Kitvei Rabbenu Bahia*, (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1970), 533-534. See also above note 16 and below note 122 .
- 33 See Gershom Scholem, "The Garment of the Souls and Haluqa' de-Rabbanan," *Tarbiz*, vol. 24 (1955), 290-306 (Hebrew); Elliot Wolfson, "The Secret of the Garment in Nahmanides," *Daat*, vol. 24 (1990), XLI-XLII.
- 34 ibidem.
- 35 On God as planting a cosmic tree see Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, tr. A. Arkush, ed. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1987), 81-83, esp. p. 83, n. 36, where he points to an interesting parallel to Sefer ha-Bahir in a fragment attributed to Simon Magus; cf. Hippolytus, *Elenchos* VI:9.
- 36 See also Isaac Baer, "The Early Hasidim in Philo's Writings and in the Hebrew Tradition," *Zion*, vol. 18,(1953). 104 (Hebrew), and E.E. Urbach's critique thereof in *The Sages: Their Concepts and Belief* translated by I. Abrahams, (Jerusalem, 1979), 791 notes 67-69 .
- 37 Genesis 12:8 .
- 38 Psalm 104:17, 15:1, 39, p. 135.
- 40 On this issue see M. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1988), 181-182.
- 41 See R. Ezra of Gerone, *Commentary on the Talmudic' Aggadot*, Ms. Vatican 294, fol. 38a.
- 42 rashuyyiot .
- 43 Namely the third sefirah, Binah, which is referred in the Geronese school by this term. See Moshe Idel, "On R. Isaac Sagi Nahor's Mystical Intention of the Eighteen Benedictions," Michal Oron and Amos Goldreich (eds.) *Massu'ot, Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb* (Jerusalem, 1994), 42-47 (Hebrew). Given the fact that the two powers are described as receiving their 'authority' from the third sefirah, the most plausible interpretation of the nature of these sefirot are those who immediately precede this sefirah, namely Hesed and Gevurah. See also Rabbi Abraham ben David, the father of R. Isaac the Blind, E. Ezra's teacher, who also discussed these two sefirot as pointing to male and female. Cf. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 129-131 .

- 44 See also the same view in R. Ezra of Gerone's "Secret of the Tree of Knowledge," translated in Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, tr. J. Neugroschel ed J. Chipman, (Schocken Books, New York, 1991), 65-66 .
- 45 The Hebrew form Be-tokh, means both 'within' and 'in the middle of', but it is obvious that the Kabbalist uses the second meaning here, as the quote of the Targum shows .
- 46 A close parallel to this passage is found in a middle 13<sup>th</sup> century Kabbalistic text; see Ms. Jerusalem 80 1703, fol. 21a, which uses the palm tree as a parable in exactly the same context. On the palm tree in the theosophy of the book of Bahir see G. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 172-173. On the use of the palm tree in order to convey the concept of union see already in BT, Sanhedrin, fol. 64a and Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 38, 289 note 11 .
- 47 Ms. Vatican 294, fol. 27a. As pointed out by Efraim Gottlieb, *The Kabbalah in the Writings of R. Bahya ben Asher ibn Halawa*, (Kariat Sefer, Jerusalem, 1970), 49, this passage influenced R. Jacob ben Sheshet's Meshiv Devarim Nekhohim, 179; see also R. Jacob ben Sheshet's Meshiv Devarim Nekhohim, 123 where the term Neti`ah occurs. It should be mentioned that the singular form of the shoot, qotzet bi-neti`ah occurs in two of R. Azriel of Gerone's writings; see Gershom Scholem, "Extant Material from the Writings of R. Azriel of Gerone," *Sefer Zikkaron le-Gullak u- Klein* (Jerusalem, 1942), 113 (Hebrew), and in I. Tishby (ed.), *Commentary on the Talmudic Aggadot*, (Jerusalem, 1945), 17 .
- 48 Commentary on Song of Songs, in Chavel, *Kitvei ha-Ramban*, vol. II, 504.
- 49 Proverbs 10:25 .
- 50 Hefetz.
- 51 *Sod ha-Keruvim*, Ms. Parma, de Rossi 1230, fols 108 b-109a; Ms. Paris BN 823, fol. 823, fol. 54a. More on this short treatise see Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, 299-300.
- 52 It means also 'because of' .
- 53 Isaiah 27:5 .
- 54 *Sod ha-Keruvim*, Ms. Parma de Rossi 1230, fol. 109b.
- 55 See *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 170-172.
- 56 Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 92-94.
- 57 Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 93.
- 58 Printed by Gershom Scholem as an appendix to his *The Qabbalah of Sefer ha-Temunah and of R. Abraham Abulafia*, ed. Y. ben Shlomo, (Akademion, Jerusalem, 1969), 235 (Hebrew) .
- 59 Different forms of this phrase recur in the same context .
- 60 BT, Sabbath, fol. 117b.
- 61 *The Qabbalah of Sefer ha-Temunah*, p. 235.
- 62 See e.g. below, note 120.
- 63 Ginnat 'Egoz, fol. 15c.
- 64 These three names recur several times in this book as a very important issue. See e.g. Ginnat 'Egoz, fol. 16ab.
- 65 More on the intellectual aspects of the Paradise in the school to which Gikatilla belonged see below.
- 66 Shalosh Ma`alot in gematria 1176=1+176=177.
- 67 The two words are obscure; I assume that they point to the movement of a certain kind of matter.
- 68 be-`anan, in gematria 177. On this phrase see below in another Abulafian text .
- 69 Golem daq amounts in gematria 177.



- 70 *Sefer 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, Ms. Oxford-Bodeliana 1580, fol. 54a.
- 71 le-hasig. In this context it may also mean to achieve.
- 72 Exodus 16:20.
- 73 Mayim in gematria is 90 like Man, the Hebrew term for Manna.
- 74 On river as an allegory for the descent of the influx see more below.
- 75 *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, Ms. Oxford-Bodeliana 1582, fol. 3b.
- 76 See especially his 'Secret of Prophecy' in his *Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, Ms. Munchen 405, fol. 63a-68b.
- 77 See Moshe Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia*, (SUNY Press, Albany, 1989), 115-117.
- 78 On this issue see Lawrence Berman, "Maimonides and the Fall of Man", *AJS review*, vol. V (1980), 9-10; Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides' Interpretation of the Adam Stories*, 93-98; Aviezer Ravitzky, "Samuel ibn Tibbon and the Esoteric Interpretation of the Guide of the Perplexed," *AJS Review*, vol. VI (1981), 103-108; Waren Harvey, *Hasdai Crescas' Critique of the Theory of the Acquired Intellect* (Ph.D. Thesis, Columbia University, Ann Arbor Michigan, 1973), 205-217.
- 79 Berman, "Maimonides and the Fall of Man", 9; see also p. 8 (and note 19) where he describes the "pardes (Paradise)" as "the contemplation of the truth." See also Lawrence V. Berman "Maimonides, the Disciple of Alfarabi," *Israel Oriental Studies*, vol. IV (1974), 164, note 31, and 167 note 44 and Stephen Harvey, "Maimonides in the Sultan's Palace," in Joel L. Kraemer (ed.), *Perspectives on Maimonides*, (Littman Library, Oxford, 1991), 99.
- 80 kol ha-hokhmot.
- 81 *Malmad ha-Talmidim*, (Lyck, 1866), fol. 142a.
- 82 See e.g. *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, Ms. Munchen 405, fols 61 b-62a.
- 83 Hokhmat ha-'Elohut.
- 84 Mi-qiyum ha-Ta'anug.
- 85 *Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, Ms. Oxford-Bodeliana 1580, fols 131 b-132a.
- 86 See Ms. Firenze-Laurenziana, II:48, fol. 24a: "the comprehension of God is a delight".
- 87 See M. Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, tr. J. Chipman, (SUNY Press, Albany, 1988), 188-189, 214, note 72. See also below note 112 .
- 88 See the text referred in note 70 above .
- 89 Earth. The Hebrew form amounts in gematria 291 like the combination of the Hebrew Gan 'Eden ve-Geheinom. This gematria recurs also below, in the next passage .
- 90 Ms. Firenze-Laurenziana II, 48, fol. 21a. See also 'Imrei Shefer, Ms. Paris BN 777, 90.
- 91 See "'Sefer Ha-Ot'. Apokalypse des Pseudo-Propheten und Pseudo-Messias Abraham Abulafia," in A. Jellinek (ed.) *Jubelschrift zum siebzigsten Geburtstag des Prof. Dr. H Graetz* (Breslau 1887), 76. More on this topic see Moshe Idel, "'The Time of the End': in Albert Baumgarten (ed.), *Apocalypticism and Its Spiritualization in Abraham Abulafia's Eschatology*", *Apocalyptic Time*, (Brill, Leiden, 2000), 155-186.
- 92 In Hebrew it means either destruction or conversion. In gematria, it amounts to 344, like Pardes. An important parallel to this dialectical view is found in a student of Abulafia, Gikatilla: "In truth, to some of them it was a Pardes, and to others it was Shemad. And the secret depends upon the secret of the Tetragrammaton." *Perush ha-Niqqud*, Ms. Paris BN 774, fols. 47b-48a; Ms. Vatican, 603 fol. 189b; Ms. New York, JTS 851, fol. 62b. I wonder whether the gematria of

Pardes = 344 = Shemad is not alluded also by the phrase Shem D, namely the name of the Tetragrammaton. Though the phrase Shem D does not occur in any of the manuscripts, but only Shem ben Dalet, the Kabbalist hinted at a secret, which regularly in this type of literature is a numerical equivalence. Indeed, in a fragment from a writing of Gikatilla extant in Ms. New York, JTS 1884, fol. 30b, the relationship between the Tetragrammaton, Pardes and Shemad is mentioned, but, unfortunately, the text breaks precisely when the author was supposed to elaborate upon this issue.

93 ibidem, fol. 6b.

94 Gershom Scholem, *The Qabbalah of Sefer ha-Temunah and Abraham Abulafia*, ed. J. ben Shlomo, (Akademon, Jerusalem, 1969), 234.

95 ha-Mitzvot=541=sekhel ha-po'el.

96 For this simile for the mystical union between the human intellect and the Agent Intellect see M. Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, (SUNY Press, Albany, 1989), 13.

97 In Hebrew the consonant of the candle, ha-ner are the same as those of river nahar.

98 Or God.

99 Genesis 2:10.

100 Ms. Firenze-Laurenziana II: 48, fols. 11b-12a.

101 Compare to other expressions of this view discussed in M. Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 15-16. For an explicit statement that the expulsion from the Paradise means the fall from the intellectual into the imaginary see the anonymous 15th century treatise close, from some points of view to ecstatic Kabbalah, entitled *Sefer Toledot 'Adam*, Ms. Oxford-Bodeliana 836, fol. 185a.

102 Sar Gan `Eden.

103 Ms. Firenze-Laurenziana II:48, fol. 22a.

104 See Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, 100-105.

105 See Moshe Idel, *The Writings and Doctrines of R. Abraham Abulafia*, (Ph.D. Thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1976), 86-128 (Hebrew)

106 ibidem, 86-92.

107 ha-guf, namely the body, and ha-nefesh, namely the soul are numerically equivalent to 529, like the consonants of the phrase 'divine science', ha-hokhmah ha-`Elohit.

108 Tziyyur.

109 This term means 'testify' and is numerically identical to the term `Eden. On 'witness' see below, note 116.

110 The last sentence points to the two trees in the Paradise.

111 *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, Ms. Paris BN 774, fol. 152ab.

112 On the feeling of delight see above, notes 84, 87.

113 This phrase has the same consonants as Gan `Eden, and thus the same numerical value.

114 II Kings 3:15.

115 Ms. Oxford-Bodeliana 1582, fol. 7a.

116 See Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, 89-90 and note 109 above.

117 II Kings 3:15.

118 Psalm 150:3.

119 The combination of the legend of David's harp with the verse in II Kings 2:3 appears in several places. Cf *Pesiqeta de-Rav Kahana*, (ed. S. Buber), chapter 7, fols

62b-63a, and Buber's footnotes; also Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, (JPS, Philadelphia, 1946), vol. VI, 262, notes 81-83.

120 See above, note 62.

121 *Sefer 'Imrei Shefer*, Ms. Munchen 40, fol. 246b; quoted also in the anthology of Abulafian material collected by a 17th century Kabbalist Rabbi Joseph Hamitz, Ms. Oxford-Bodeliana 2239, fol. 130a.

122 See, e.g., the view of the famous R. Tzevi Elimelekh Shapira of Dinov, '*Iggera' de-Kallah*, (Premislany, 1914 ) fol. 46b, where the assumption is that every righteous creates his own Paradise by the study of the Torah and prayer, which actualize a potential Paradise or R. Nahman of Bratzlav, *Sefer ha-Middot*, item Tzaddiq, part II no. 5: "Each man has his Paradise engraved on the brilliance of his countenance." See also notes 12, 13, 16, and 32 above. I assume that the engraving of the Paradise on the face of the righteous has something to do with an assumption found in Lurianic Kabbalah, that the sins of man are written on his forehead.

123 For the early comparisons between the two see Gary Anderson, "Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden? Reflections on Early Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Garden of Eden," *HTR*, vol. 82:2 (1989), 121-148 who important remarks, which differ from my description here deal, nevertheless, with much earlier material than I am concerned with here.

124 See also M. Idel, "Conceptualizations of Music in Jewish Mysticism," in Lawrence Sullivan (ed.), *Enchanting Powers, Music in the World's Religions*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1997), 159-188.

125 See especially his still unedited *Sefer Mishkan ha- 'Edut* where the structure of the Paradise is discussed in great details.

126 See also my "Some Concepts of Time and History in Kabbalah" in E. Carlebach, J.M. Efron, D.N. Myers (eds.), *Jewish History and Jewish Memory, Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi*, (Brandeis University Press, Hanover and London, 1998), 153-188. This does not mean that there were not numerous Kabbalists who believed into a terrestrial Paradise, and dealt with legends about persons who tried to reach it in the past.

127 See Idel, "The Journey to the Paradise." For terrestrial Paradises in the medieval and Renaissance culture see Delumeau, *Une histoire de paradis* and the vast bibliography cited by him.

128 See, e.g., R. Qalonimus Qalman Epstein, *Ma'or va-Shemesh*, (Jerusalem, 1992), p. 281. See also M. Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, (SUNY Press, Albany, 1995), 225.

129 See M. Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 236-244, 272-273. The need of acknowledging the phenomenological diversity of concepts found in Judaism in general, and in Kabbalah in particular, and their different sources in Judaism and in other cultures, are still a desideratum in scholarship, as there still are uninformed, or naive students of Judaism who believe in the dominance of the more popular concepts of Messianism even in the mystical literature.

130 See M. Idel, "The Land of Israel in Medieval Kabbalah," in Lawrence A. Hoffman, (ed.), *The Land of Israel*, (Notre Dame University Press, Indiana, 1986), 170-187; idem, "Some Conceptions of the Land of Israel in Medieval Jewish Thought," in Ruth Link-Salinger & alia (eds.) *A Straight Path: Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture, Essays in Honor of Arthur Hyman*, (The Catholic University Press, Washington, 1988), 214-140; M. Idel, "The Land of a Divine Vitality: Eretz

Israel in Hasidic Thought," in Aviezer Ravitzky (ed.), *The Land of Israel in Modern Jewish Thought*, (Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, Jerusalem, 1998), 275 (Hebrew).

131. See M. Idel, *Hasidism*, 227-238.

132 On intercorporeality see M. Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, passim.